

Eastern Pwo language

Eastern Pwo or **Phlou**, (Burmese: အရှေ့ပိုးကရင်) is a Karen language spoken by over a million people in Burma and by about 50,000 in Thailand, where it has been called *Southern Pwo*. It is not intelligible with other varieties of Pwo.

A script called Leke was developed between 1830 and 1860 and is used by members of the millenarian Leke sect of Buddhism. Otherwise a variety of Burmese alphabets are used, and refugees in Thailand have created a Thai alphabet which is in limited use.

Contents
Distribution
Phonology
Consonants
Vowels
Tones
Dialects
Alphabet
History
Decimals
Fractions
References

Distribution

- Kayin State and Tanintharyi Region: long contiguous area near the Thai border
- Bago Region: Bago and Toungoo townships

Phonology

The following displays the phonological features of two of the eastern Pwo Karen dialects, Pa'an and Tavoy:

Consonants

Eastern Pwo	
ꨀꨣꩌ, ꨀꨣꩌꨣꩌꨣꩌ	
Native to	Burma, Thailand
Ethnicity	Pwo Karen people
Native speakers	1 million ^[1]
Language family	Sino-Tibetan <ul style="list-style-type: none">(Tibeto-Burman)<ul style="list-style-type: none">Karen languages<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pwo<ul style="list-style-type: none">Eastern Pwo
Writing system	Burmese script (various alphabets) Leke script, Thai script
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	kjp
Glottolog	pwoe1235 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/pwoe1235) ^[2]

		<u>Labial</u>	<u>Dental</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Post-alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Uvular/ Glottal</u>
<u>Plosive</u>	<u>voiceless</u>	p	t̪	t			k	ʔ
	<u>aspirated</u>	p ^h		t ^h			k ^h	
	<u>voiced</u>	b		d				
	<u>implosive</u>	(b)		(d)				
<u>Affricate</u>	<u>voiceless</u>				tɕ			
	<u>aspirated</u>				tɕ ^h			
<u>Fricative</u>	<u>voiceless</u>				ɕ		x	h
	<u>voiced</u>						ɣ	ʁ
<u>Nasal</u>		m		n		ɲ		
<u>Trill</u>				r				
<u>Approximant</u>	<u>central</u>	w				j		
	<u>lateral</u>			l				

- Post-alveolar affricates /tɕ, tɕ^h/, are realized as fricatives [s, s^h], among some formal dialects.
- /t̪/ when pronounced slowly is phonetically realized as a dental affricate [t̪θ].
- Voiced plosives /b, d/ are pronounced as implosives [ɓ, ɗ] only in the Pa'an dialect.
- /h/ does not exist in the Tavoy dialect.
- /j/ may tend to be slightly fricativized [j̥] when preceding front vowels.
- /r/ may also be realized as a tap [ɾ].

Vowels

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>	
<u>High</u>	i	ɨ	ɯ	u
<u>Near-high</u>	ɪ		ʊ	
<u>High-mid</u>	e		ɤ	o
<u>Low-mid</u>	ɛ		ɔ	
<u>Low</u>		a		

- /ɪ/ does not occur after a /w/ sound.
- /ɪ, ʊ, ɛ, ɔ/ are merged with /i, u, e, o/ in the Tavoy dialect.^[3]

Tones

Four tones are present in Eastern Pwo:

Tones	
ṽ	ṽ
ṽ	ṽ
ṽ	ṽ
ṽ	ṽ

Dialects

- Pa'an (Inland Eastern Pwo Karen, Moulmein)
- Kawkareik (Eastern Border Pwo Karen)
- Tavoy (Southern Pwo Karen)

Alphabet

History

The Eastern Pwo Karen language is heavily derived from the Mon script and the Burmese script.

က	ခ	ဂ	ဃ	င	စ
ka(/ka ^ʔ /)	kha(/k ^h a ^ʔ /)	ga(/ga ^ʔ /)	gha(/k ^h a ^ʔ /)	ṅa(/ŋa ^ʔ /)	ca(/ca ^ʔ /)
ဆ	ဇ	ဈ	ည	ဋ	ဌ
cha(/c ^h a ^ʔ /)	sa(/sa/)	sa(/sa ^ʔ /)	ña(/ña ^ʔ /)	ṭa(/ta ^ʔ /)	ṭha(/t ^h a ^ʔ /)
ဍ	ဎ	ဏ	တ	ထ	ဒ
ḍa(/ḍa ^ʔ /)	ḍha(/d ^h a ^ʔ /)	ṇ(/ṇa/)	ta(/ta ^ʔ /)	tha(/t ^h a ^ʔ /)	da(/da ^ʔ /)
ဓ	န	ပ	ဖ	ဗ	ဘ
dha(/t ^h a ^ʔ /)	na(/ṇa ^ʔ /)	pa(/pa ^ʔ /)	pha(/p ^h a ^ʔ /)	ba(/ba ^ʔ /)	bha(/b ^h a ^ʔ /)
မ	ယ	ရ	လ	ဝ	သ
ma(/ma ^ʔ /)	ya(/ya ^ʔ /)	ra(/ra ^ʔ /)	la(/la ^ʔ /)	wa(/wa ^ʔ /)	sa(/sa ^ʔ /)
ဟ	ဌ	အ	ဓ	ဟ	ဃ
ha(/ha ^ʔ /)	la(/la ^ʔ /)	a(/ʔa ^ʔ /)	ba(/ba ^ʔ /)	hha(/ŋga ^ʔ /)	ghwa(/ŋghè ^ʔ /)

Numbers

Number	Eastern Pwo Karen		
	Numeral	Written	Pronounce
0	၀	ပှပ်ပှပ်	ပျိုဟ်ပျိုဟ် ploh plih
1	၁	လုံ	လုဟ် luh
2	၂	ဏီ	ဏီး nee
3	၃	သိုဉ်	သုဟ် thuh
4	၄	လီ	လီး Lee း lee
5	၅	ယါ	ယောဟ် yeh
6	၆	ဟူ	ဟု hu
7	၇	နွေ	နွေယံ nwey
8	၈	ဟိုဝ်	ဟိုဝ် xoh
9	၉	ခွေ	ခွေ khwee

10	၁၀	လုံဆီ(ဆီ)	luh chi/chi
11	၁၁	ဆီလုံ	chi luh
12	၁၂	ဆီဏီ	chi ne
20	၂၀	ဏီဆီ	ne chi
21	၂၁	ဏီဆီလုံ	ne chi luh
22	၂၂	ဏီဆီဏီ	ne chi ne
100	၁၀၀	လုံဖင်.(ဖင်)	luh pong/pong
101	၁၀၁	လုံဖင်.လုံ	luh pong luh
1000	၁၀၀၀	လုံမိုင်း(မိုင်း)	luh muh/muh
10000	၁၀၀၀၀	လုံလါ(လါ)	luh lah/lah
100000	၁၀၀၀၀၀	လုံသိင်.(သိင်)	luh thay/thay

The Eastern Pwo Karen numeric symbols currently does not exist in the Burmese Unicode block.

- The number zero, *ploh plih* (ပုၼ်ပုၼ်), means "of no value".
- The number zero is not used in day-to-day life and mostly exists in writing only. People are taught to use the Burmese numeric system instead, including zero.
- *Chi* (ဆီ) denotes 10, any number from 1 to 9 **before** *chi* can be interpreted as "of ten(s)", so 20 would be *ne chi*. *Pong* (ဖင်) denotes 100, any number from 1 to 9 **before** *pong* can be interpreted as "hundred(s)", so 200 would be *ne pong*. Similarly, the same rule applies to thousand, *muh* (မိုင်း); ten-thousand, *lah* (လါ); and hundred-thousand, *thay* (သိင်).
- Numbers after the hundred-thousands (millions and above) are prefixed with *thay* (သိင်), hundred thousand. For example, one million would be *thay luh chi* (သိင်.လုံဆီ), "hundred thousand of tens"; two million would be *thay ne chi* (သိင်.ဏီဆီ), *hundred thousand of two tens*; ten million would be *thay luh pong* (သိင်.လုံဖင်), "hundred thousand of hundreds"; one billion would be *thay luh lah* (သိင်.လုံလါ), "hundred thousand of ten thousands".

Decimals

Due to the close approximation to Thailand, the Eastern Pwo Karen adopts Thai's decimal word, *chut*, (Karen: ကုၤၤၤၤ, ကုၤၤၤၤ(ၤ); Thai: ชูต; English: and, dot). For example, 1.01 is *luh chut ploh plih luh* (လုၤ ဗုၤၤၤၤ လုၤ).

Fractions

Fractions are formed by saying *puh* (ပုၤ) after the numerator **and** the denominator. For example, one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) would be *luh puh thuh puh* (လုၤပုၤသုၤပုၤ) and three over one, three-"oneths" ($\frac{3}{1}$) would be *thuh puh luh puh* (သုၤပုၤလုၤပုၤ).

References

1. Eastern Pwo (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/kjp/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
 2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Pwo Eastern Karen" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/pwoe1235>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
 3. Kato, Atsuhiko (1995). *The phonological systems of three Pwo Karen dialects*. Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area 18. pp. 63–103.
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